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Served, Sacrificed, Yet Struggling: More than 12,000 Veterans in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties Living in Financial Hardship

Pensacola, FL – They’ve served and sacrificed for our country yet nearly one quarter — 22% — of our community’s 54,392 veterans struggle to afford the basics, according to a new report from United Way of West Florida and its research partner United For ALICE.

In 2019, while 7% of the state’s veterans were deemed in poverty, 15% — more than twice as many — were ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). ALICE households earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but less than what it costs to live and work in the modern economy. Combined, 22% of Escambia and Santa Rosa counties’ veterans were below the ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival, with income that doesn’t meet the basic costs of housing, child care, health care, transportation and a smartphone plan.

“Our freedom comes with the responsibility to ensure that those who have served and sacrificed don’t struggle to make ends meet once they return home,” said United Way of West Florida CEO Laura Gilliam. “Although veterans do have additional supports not afforded nonveterans, clearly there’s still room for improvement.”

The *ALICE in Focus: Veterans* report and interactive tools reveal that while veterans show lower rates of financial hardship than individuals who never served, our community’s veterans still face some tough financial hurdles.

Some findings from *ALICE in Focus: Veterans* include:

- Racial and ethnic inequities persist with 35% of Black veterans living below the ALICE Threshold compared to 23% of Hispanic veterans and 21% of white veterans.
- Veterans with disabilities struggled more to afford the basics — 31%—compared to 20% of veterans without disabilities.
- Veterans not working experience tougher financial hardship with 34% living below the ALICE Threshold compared to 11% of working veterans.
- Veterans living alone found themselves below the ALICE Threshold much more — 37% — than veterans living in a household with others — 20%.

More information for Escambia and Santa Rosa counties can be found online at uwwf.org/aliceveterans.

Data is also available through the *ALICE in Focus: Veterans* interactive data dashboard, which provides filters for regional and local geographies, age, race, disability status, living

arrangements, work status, and proximity to military bases. Visit UnitedForALICE.org/Focus-Veterans.

ALICE in Focus: Veterans marks the third installment in the *ALICE in Focus* Research Series, which draws from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS). Each installment in the series highlights a specific segment within the ALICE demographic. The other installments focused on children and people with disabilities.

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About UWWF: *United Way of West Florida is a local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that unifies nonprofit agencies, organizations, businesses - and people - to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. With a vision of a community united to create better opportunities for all, United Way of West Florida's mission is to Unite our community and leverage resources to improve lives. For more information, visit uwwf.org.*